

I'd like to begin by thanking and applauding the commission for all of the work they have done on this important issue. My name is Corinne Rosseel and the testimony that I am offering today is from the perspective of a teacher. I have taught English as a Second Language to students in South Africa, Japan, and the United States for more than ten years.

I'm here today because you hear a lot on the news about teachers who look the other way when it comes to bullying. What you don't hear about is what happens when a teacher refuses to look the other way and the consequences that can result. I'm here today because I didn't look the other way and I believe I lost my job as a result.

By offering testimony today my hope is that what happened to me doesn't happen to teachers who are concerned about the safety of their students in the future. Although in my particular case I was protected by Massachusetts General Law chap 119 51A, it is my recommendation to this commission that this legislation could be strengthened, and further awareness and prevention could thus be created, by adding an anti-retaliatory whistle-blowing clause for teachers who report bullying. We have whistle-blowing clauses in the financial sector, why not include them in the educational sector?

I am in agreement with former northwest District Attorney General Elizabeth Scheibel who stated that "all too often, however school administrators delay, or in some cases, neglect to notify law enforcement of criminal acts committed on school property". It is for this reason that I further support her view that "referral of an incident of bullying to law enforcement be required once substantiated through a school based investigation". I would also like to propose that a stiffer fine be associated with a school's failure to report when the level of bullying rises to the potentiality of criminal charges being pursued.

A further concern for me regarding the current legislation relates to private schools. I know this question is complex as private schools do not receive government funding, but who exactly are private schools accountable to if they are not required to submit an anti-bullying plan to the state?

Thank you very much for allowing me the opportunity to speak with you today and thank you very much again to each of the members for the seriousness with which you've taken the charge of this commission. Your dedication to the issue has offered me a lot of hope.